

# *Sketch*

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*Volume 34, Number 1*

1967

*Article 18*

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## Long After the Death of a Brother

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"Herbie, each of my creations has a purpose, and if that is yours, you must accept it. How can you not want to be such a lovely thing?"

As much as I pleaded to remain a caterpillar, it was useless. Mom refused. She repeated it was a law, and I would become a butterfly just as all my kind had done before me. She said each creature's existence had its good times and its bad times. Her ending statement was "life is what you make it."

So that's how I got into this predicament. I have been fighting metamorphosis but somehow feel I'm not succeeding. It's so dark in here that I really can't tell what I look like. Hey look, the side is splitting. I'm going to be free in a minute. The suspense is just killing me. It's broken open. My wings are flapping; I'm no longer a caterpillar. But I remember what Mom told me.

"I'm a caterpillar. I'm a caterpillar."

## Long After the Death of a Brother

*by Andrea Carlisle*

*English, Jr.*

If you hadn't gone away, I never would  
have needed you, perhaps. Perhaps you would  
have seemed a brother, not a mind. But you  
did go—too far—and the sky fell long ago,  
long ago when I touched the shiny stone  
and read the nothing words and it was final.

Dakota sun stretching your mammoth shadow  
far ahead of mine, you held my hand  
and we walked the wild prairie together. You told  
me the secrets of grass, and sun and sea, of how  
at sunset the sphere sinks into the ocean  
to light the fish world and you told me I  
was not the ugly child they saw, that I had  
the special light of sunrise in my eyes  
and I laughed but loved to hear your words  
though now I know my eyes were yours, and you  
needed the sun, needed it more than I.  
You called me Tinka and would, you said, till I  
was eighty-three and we wondered what it meant  
and liked its mystery and sound; you were  
my brother, your hand was strong and I held on  
because you were my hope. Why, in the cold despair  
of your nineteenth winter did you choose to die?  
You could have waited one more day or year,  
waited until I learned that we were not  
the ugly children. We were the special ones,  
not brave nor beautiful, but wise to the secrets  
of the prairie grass. I learned too late how dear  
you were, too late to save you from your sadness.  
But could I have said you were the needed one  
with your wisdom and gentle strength? Would you have  
believed your worth? I didn't know then. A child  
doesn't know. But even then  
when we danced, during blizzards, or sang to the sun,  
even then I saw pain, not sunrise, in your eyes.